DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 349 439 CE 061 944

AUTHOR	Condelli, Larry
TITLE	Quality Indicators, Measures and Performance Standards.
INSTITUTION	Pelavin Associates, Inc., Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Vocational and Adult Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Mar 92
NOTE	12p.; For related documents, see CE 061 945-946.
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Basic Education; *Adult Literacy; Adult Programs; *Evaluation Criteria; *Evaluation Methods; Federal Legislation; *Federal Programs; *Literacy Education; Program Evaluation; Program Improvement; State Programs
IDENTIFIERS	Job Training Partnership Act 1982; *Quality Indicators

ABSTRACT

The process of developing indicators, measures, and standards of program quality can be considered a tiered, four-step process consisting of the following: (1) identification of topic areas important to program quality; (2) establishing the indicators that reflect quality for each area; (3) determining measures of the indicators; and (4) setting a numeric criterion or standard for the measure. Topic areas include program context, program process and content, and program outcomes. Quality indicators are variables that reflect effective and efficient performance. Performance measures are the data used to determine the quantitative level of performance. Performance standards are measures with a specific numeric criterion or level of performance tied to them. Indicators and performance standards can be used to assess the success of a program and to hold programs accountable for performance. Indicators can be defined using the focus group method. (Two tables provide examples of indicators, measures, and standards and a framework for development of quality indicators.) (KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED349439

QUALITY INDICATORS, MEASURES AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Larry Condelli

Prepared for:

OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL AND ADULT EDUCATION
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Prepared by:

PELAVIN ASSOCIATES, INC.
2030 M Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 785-3308

March 1992

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CE 061 944

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

QUALITY INDICATORS, MEASURES AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS: OVERVIEW AND DEFINITIONS

The process of developing indicators, measures and standards of program quality can be considered a tiered, four-step process consisting of (1) identification of topic areas important to program quality, (2) establishing the indicators that reflect quality for each area, (3) determining measures of the indicators and (4) setting a numeric criterion or standard for the measure. Each step is discussed below. Since the terms "indicators," "performance standards" and "measures" are often used interchangeably, definitions are provided to clarify the terms for our discussions.

- **Topics.** The Department of Education has identified three general topic areas to develop quality indicators for ABE programs: program context, program process and content, and program outcomes. Within these three general areas, Pelavin Associates has identified more specific topics areas based on a review of state monitoring instruments, evaluation studies and funding protocols. The general areas are defined as follows.

  Program context -- the setting in which the program operates including characteristics of participants, organization of the delivery system and the needs and demographics of the community.

  Program process and content -- components of the program that define how it operates, such as program planning, recruitment of students, intake and assessment, staff characteristics, curriculum and instructional content, materials and equipment used, assessment of student progress, evaluation and follow-up.

  Program outcomes -- impact of the program on students, such as learning gains and goal attainment.

- **Indicators.** Once topics have been agreed on, indicators of quality are established within each area. A *quality indicator* is a variable that reflects effective and efficient performance. For example, retention of students in a program may be a indicator of quality. In adult education, it is difficult to establish indicators in many areas, since there is a lack of agreement and empirical research on what constitutes effective and efficient practice.

- **Measures.** A performance *measure* is the data used to determine the quantitative level of performance. The measure is the operational definition of the indicator. For example, retention may be measured by the number of hours students remain in the program.

- **Performance standards.** A performance standard is a measure with a specific numeric criterion or level of performance tied to it. A retention performance standard would specify a minimum number of hours of instruction per student, for example. The standard defines a level of acceptable performance on the measure. Standards may be established for a single point in time or to measure increases in performance over time. Among Federal programs, the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs have the most well known system of performance standards.

The following exhibit provides examples of indicators, measures and standards.

Uses of Indicators and Performance Standards

Indicators provide clear and unambiguous methods for assessing the success of a program in meeting goals. They promote program improvement by pointing to areas of excellence and weakness. Ideally, indicators will help all users of adult education services and those responsible for administering them. Policy makers could use the information from indicators to inform decisions. Administrators could assess the effectiveness of programs to improve them to better meet the needs of students and the community. Students, employers and other users of adult education services could use indicators to compare the effectiveness of different programs. The set of papers on indicators you received discusses some of the implications of using indicators for different types of providers and programs.

Performance standards serve the same functions as indicators but also are used to hold programs accountable for performance by adding a system of incentives for meeting the standards or sanctions for failing to meet them. There are potential dangers, however, to using performance standards, as they may produce unintended effects on program design and participant characteristics. Many of these issues are discussed in the *Quality Indicators for Adult Education Programs: Lessons Learned from Other Programs*, prepared by Pelavin Associates.

Goals of Focus Group Meetings

With these dual uses in mind, it is our goal to develop a list of indicators of program quality. Within the three major topic areas specified by OVAE, Pelavin Associates has identified a preliminary list of additional topics and indicators, as described in the report *Synthesis of State Quality Indicators for Adult Education Programs*. The attached exhibit presents these topics using the framework discussed here. At four focus group meetings, we will develop a list of quality indicators by: (1) discussing and refining the topics identified, adding or deleting topics as necessary; (2) discussing the specific indicators and reaching consensus on them for each topic; and (3) prioritizing the indicators to develop a manageable number. We will also discuss measurement of some indicators as needed to clarify or refine their meaning. However, we will **not** deal with establishing performance standards as part of the meeting.

We do not want a laundry list of indicators covering every possible dimension of adult education programs. The final list of indicators should:

- Be a manageable number so as not to overburden state and local programs with data collection;
- Be measurable without excessive burden;
- Represent the essential elements of programs that define quality;
- Accommodate the diverse nature of the adult education delivery system; and
- Be sensitive to the diverse needs of learners.

Examples of Indicators, Measures and Standards

Topic	Quality Indicator	Performance Measure	Performance Standard
Outcomes	• Retention in program	• Number of hours of instruction received	• Minimum of 35 hours of instructional time
		• Student achieves personal goal	• Minimum of 75 percent of students achieve personal goals
Community Input in Program Planning	• Use of an advisory board	• Frequency of meeting of board	• Board meets a minimum of twice annually
		• Composition of board	• Board membership reflects demographics of community
Student Outcomes	• Employment	• Percentage of students obtaining employment	• Minimum of 40 percent of students seeking employment obtain jobs
	• Improvement in job quality	• Percentage of students finding or being promoted to higher paying job	• Minimum of 40 percent of students obtain a better job

EXHIBIT

Framework for Development of Quality Indicators

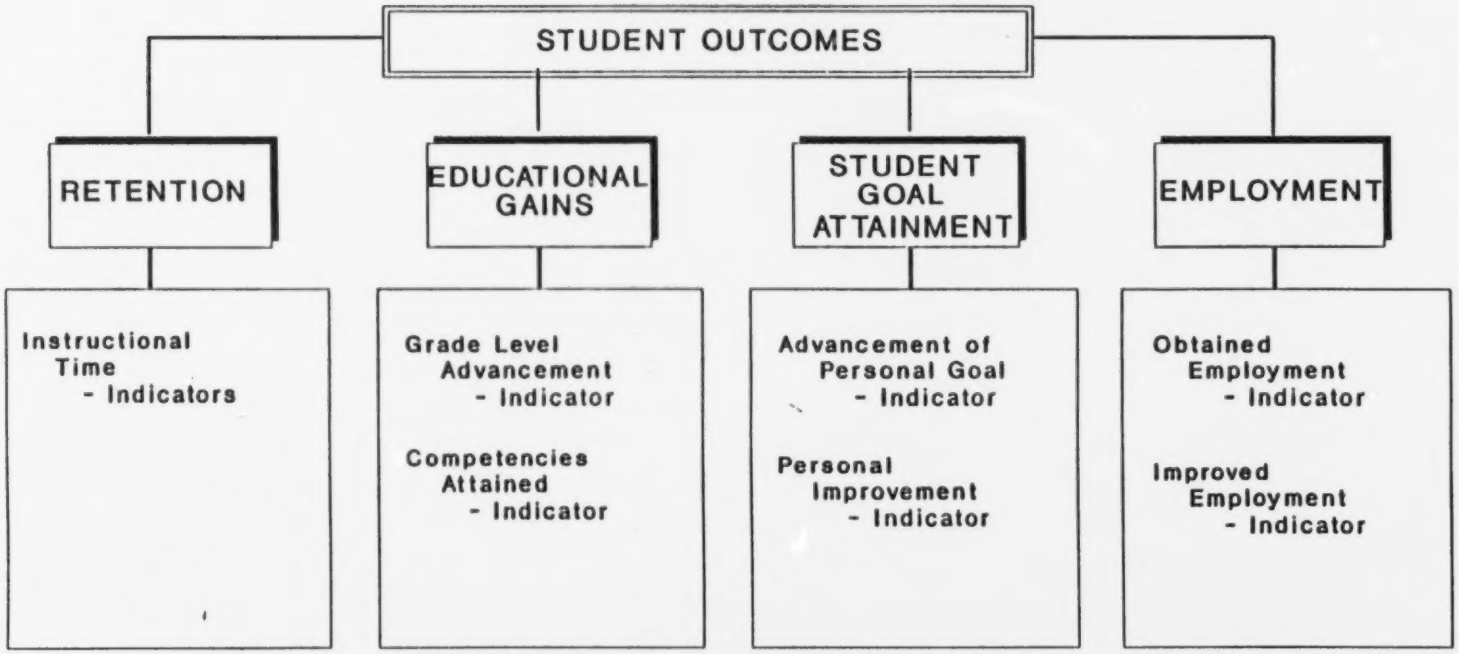

EXHIBIT (Continued)

Framework for Development of Quality Indicators

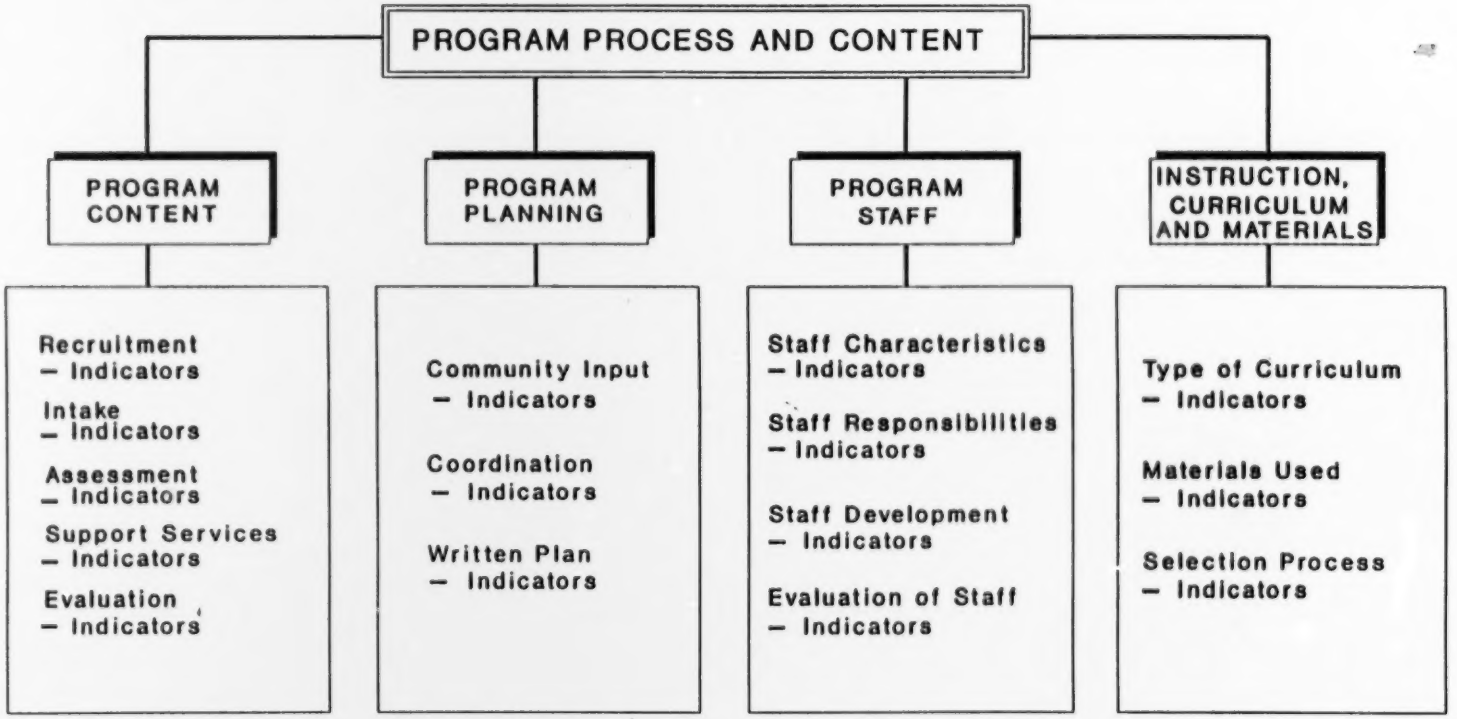

EXHIBIT (Continued)

Framework for Development of Quality Indicators